

How digital contact boosts conversions

A chance meeting at a marketing conference in 2017 led to the formation of a highly successful partnership between BMW and Mini dealers Cotswold Motor Group and the electronic customer relationship management (eCRM) and social media agency, Marketing Delivery.

Since the partnership was formed, Cotswold Group dealerships have increased workshop utilisation and increased sales activity. In addition, efficiency improved, customer satisfaction, already high, increased still further and new social media channels have been opened.

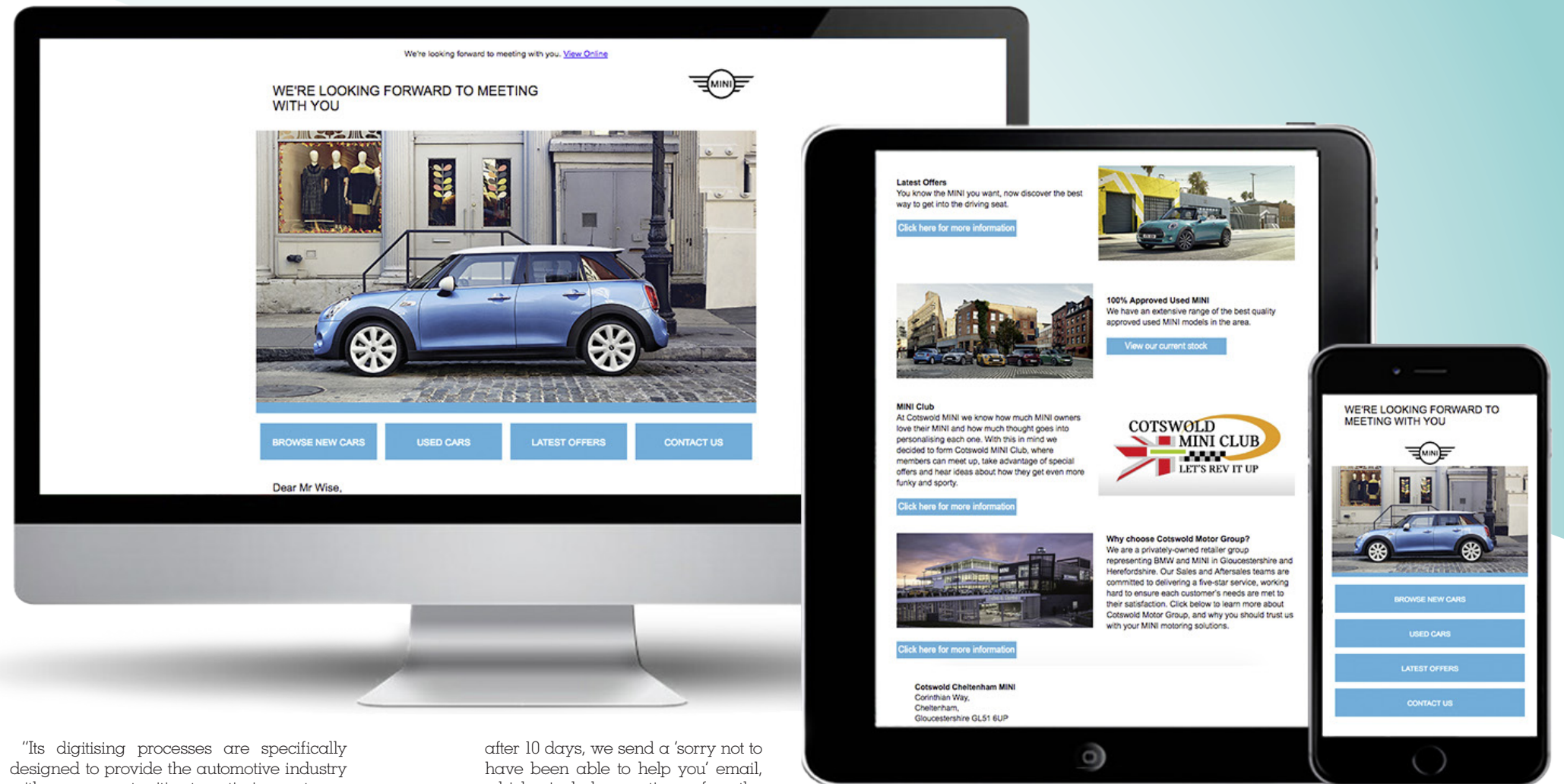
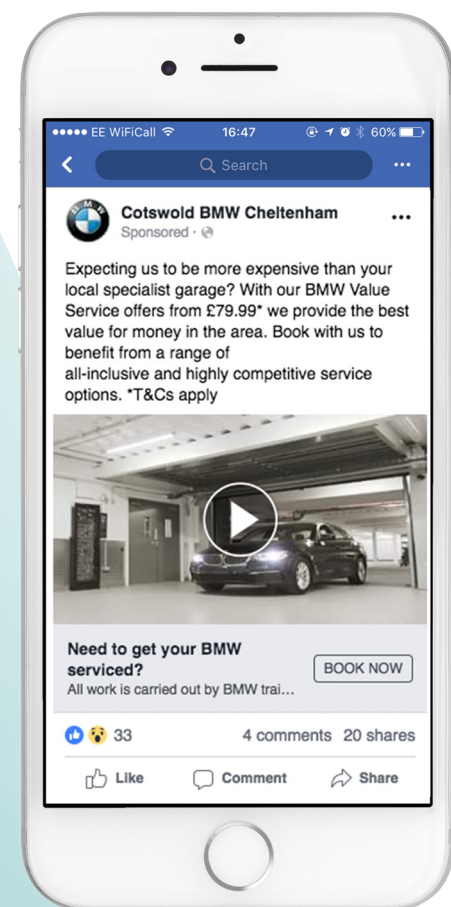
The Cotswold Motor Group is an independent company, established in 1995 by two main shareholders, Peter Harris and Andrew Hulcoop – the group's managing director. It has BMW and Mini retail centres across Gloucestershire and Herefordshire, and following the merging of its Cheltenham and Gloucester dealerships in 2017, Cotswold Group invested £18 million to create their flagship dealership. It also has a Motorrad motorcycle retail centre in Cheltenham and an approved bodyshop and pre-delivery inspection centre in Tewkesbury.

Janine Liddle, Cotswold Group's aftersales retention manager, said: "Working with Marketing Delivery has made a real difference. We have seen an increase in conversion rates through customers who have engaged with the Marketing Delivery process and we have seen tangible benefits in the growth of our aftersales, specifically with our MOT business through our email reminders. In addition, the whole process has reduced costs while allowing us to become more efficient and to focus directly on the needs of our customers."

"We were a very successful business before the formation of our partnership – as evidenced by the £18m investment in our new site. What Marketing Delivery has done is give us an edge in what is a very challenging market."

WE HAVE SEEN TANGIBLE BENEFITS... SPECIFICALLY WITH OUR MOT BUSINESS THROUGH OUR EMAIL REMINDERS

JANINE LIDDLE, COTSWOLD MOTOR GROUP



"Its digitising processes are specifically designed to provide the automotive industry with new opportunities to optimise customer loyalty and interaction and it has certainly done that for us."

Before it signed up with Marketing Delivery, the Cotswold Group aftersales team would telephone and text potential customers several times over the course of a few weeks – a labour-intensive process, which some recipients ignored. Now, the majority of its communications are conducted via email, with Marketing Delivery managing the mailing and the database.

On receipt of a sales enquiry, whether in person in the showroom, by email or by phone, Marketing Delivery sends out a suite of emails, which takes the customer easily through the whole sales process. The first email thanks them for their enquiry. A few days later, if there has been no response, a prompt is sent to see if the customer is still in the market. Customers are also invited to join a 'car alert', which identifies the type of car they are interested in and offers to send details of similar vehicles as they come into stock.

"That keeps us in communication with the customer," said Liddle. "If there is no response

after 10 days, we send a 'sorry not to have been able to help you' email, which includes options for the customer to click on, to show whether or not they are still in the market."

"We have found that making contact through a series of well placed emails has proved very effective. Customers are far more inclined to engage with us and to give honest answers as to why they may not have taken their enquiry forward. For example, it could be that they expected more in part-exchange or have seen a different model elsewhere or decided the vehicle we showed them was a little too expensive. Whatever their response, it not only gives us a chance to re-engage with them, but also allows us to keep our database up to date, which is essential for successful marketing."

Liddle said the only people that Cotswold Group contacts by phone now are those who prefer not to be contacted by email, which she added was a more effective use of time and resources.

"The fact that we are able to communicate with our customers at a time that suits them best has led to improved customer retention. They can email us in the evenings and at

weekends, when they are relaxed and have the space in which to gather their thoughts and reply at their leisure – something they are not always able to do over the phone or face-to-face. We find this especially so when they have something awkward to say – that they have bought a car elsewhere, for example. But even learning about a 'lost sale' is useful because we can use that information to update our database."

"If we have got the price point wrong or they have been looking at a car that they have now decided is not suitable, we can then re-engage them, suggesting other models that may suit their needs. The whole process is far more relaxed and generates a very positive response from our customers. Throughout, they have the option to 'unsubscribe', but we find that it is very rarely used," said Liddle.

She said the Cotswold Group had found Marketing Delivery to be a 'user-friendly' company to deal with, as well as approachable and enthusiastic.

"We have frequent meetings. They are

always coming up with new business development ideas and ways of engaging with our customers. They are also very receptive to any ideas we may come up with," said Liddle.

"Working with them has given us the confidence to set up an entirely separate Facebook page to promote our aftersales, which is something we have never considered before. The message they helped us to get across is that, while many people will expect us as a BMW/Mini main dealer to be more expensive, in fact we are not."

"Once the Facebook page is online, we anticipate conquest business from people who are not already in our network. The potential is there for huge expansion, while at the same time raising our profile in this highly competitive section of the market."

Customer loyalty has three key elements – retaining existing customers, re-engaging lapsed customers and adding conquest customers. Marketing Delivery has ensured that, for the Cotswold Motor Company, these three elements are now at their strongest.